

Emergency Room



**Sullivan Elementary School
North Adams, Massachusetts**

Subject Area

Language Arts, Math,
Health, Science, Fine Arts,
School/to/Career

Area of Service

Human needs

Grade Level

Kindergarten

Author of Project

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In Brief

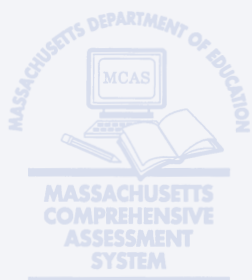
After the pediatric wing in the local hospital closed, a class of kindergartners helped the community address the needs of their “young people” by making the existing emergency room child friendly. Children’s original artwork hung on the walls of the hospital. A “big important book” explaining hospital procedures, written and illustrated by the kindergartners, was available for parents and children to read while waiting in the emergency room. Finally, new toys for the waiting room were purchased to help comfort patients.

Learner Outcomes

Students learn to:

- Develop characteristics of caring, compassion, and good citizenship;
- Express themselves through writing and art;
- Develop problem solving and cooperative learning skills; and
- Develop an understanding of the money system.

MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK CONNECTIONS



This unit is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Listed are the subject areas and the learning strands addressed:

English/Language Arts

Language strand: 1, 3, 5

Literature: 8, 9

Composition: 20, 21, 22, 23, 25

Media Strand: 26

OVERVIEW

The Need

In order to remain fiscally solvent, the North Adams Regional Hospital made necessary but drastic changes in the way it conducted business. In the process, the pediatric wing closed and many children had to use the emergency room as their primary care facility. Children expressed fear and discomfort around their experiences at the hospital. The students volunteered to change the appearance of the emergency room to ease the anxieties so many of them were experiencing. Their efforts to create a nurturing environment were guided and supported by the classroom teacher, the school librarian and the regional hospital personnel.

Recognizing the need to create a “more nurturing” or “less frightening” emergency room experience for the pediatric population, the kindergarten class set out to create a pleasant place for a child to be with his/her family. After receiving approval and support from the hospital personnel to create an emergency room waiting area that welcomes children, the partnership between the Sullivan School and the North Adams Regional Hospital Day Care was established.

A CSL Response

Kindergartners changed the hospital emergency room experience for all their peers. After touring the facility with their teacher, these children created art work to decorate the walls and purchased toys for the waiting room area. More importantly the class wrote a book to be read by the parent and child while sitting in the waiting room. This children’s book explained the emergency room procedures. Interviewing hospital personnel, from the CEO to members of the housekeeping staff, the children not only collected pertinent information to include in their hospital room book, but also made discoveries of their own regarding medical careers, safety precautions and germs.

Service Component

In the spirit of “caring about others” a class of five and six year olds learned early in their lives, they could make a difference in the lives of others. Throughout the school year the children maintained their enthusiasm, as they took steps to make the “emergency room” become more family-friendly.

Celebration

The hospital emergency room served as a place of celebration for a special group of kindergartners determined to “cheer up” the surroundings. With an air of maturity, these children climbed ladders to secure their artwork. They explained to the nurses, doctors, janitorial staff, and cafeteria workers why they were there and what made their work worthwhile. In celebration of their contribution to the community each child received a certificate of achievement, followed by a reception in the cafeteria.

Reporters from the local papers interviewed class members, who shared their goals, accomplishments and what they had learned. The smiles on the faces of the adults during the celebration reflected the sense of pride in the children for their accomplishments, especially at such a young age. The children’s smiles reflected their own pride in creating a patient-friendly emergency room for the pediatric population.

Academic Gains

Working cooperatively in small groups, the children developed interpersonal skills as they drew pictures to decorate the walls of the hospital. Collecting data regarding hospital procedures, the students developed listening and oral language skills as they interviewed the hospital personnel. The new knowledge the students gained from the answers to their research questions was shared with the public through a big book of writing.

Math became an important aspect of this project. Students not only earned the funds to purchase toys for the emergency room, but they also practiced comparative shopping strategies to purchase the items at an affordable price.

At the outset, the kindergartners thought that buying the toys would be easy, but they eventually realized that there were many points to consider. How would the toy be laundered or disinfected in this setting? How safe was the toy for very young children? How many parts made up the toy?

Throughout this project speaking, listening, writing, math and thinking skills laid the foundation necessary for the children to be able to complete the multileveled tasks.

Societal Gains

At the heart of this project young children are learning they can make a difference in their community. As a result of the kindergartner's taking the time to collaborate on ways to improve the new pediatric emergency room setting, many ill children would now have positive experiences at the hospital. The staff at the hospital wrote the children a note after the redecorated emergency room had been in use for sometime. The note explained that the hospital routinely had to use a restraining board with uncooperative children. The note went on to say that since the students had done their work in the hospital, this board had not been needed. The doctors and nurses credited the students with this success.

The students also received a letter from an elderly gentleman who had been waiting for some tests at the hospital. Nervous and agitated upon his arrival, he happened to be seated in the room that the students had decorated. After reading the book written by the children and looking at the decorations on the wall, he told the students he was calmer and able to face his tests with much more composure. The man thanked the students for their contributions to the emergency room.

In addition to helping students be aware of other people who may be in need, this project also helped the children develop the skills necessary to work as a team. The students realized it was okay not to agree on every decision. When a group decision was required, the students used a ballot box and voted. The ballot system exposed them to the basics of our democratic voting system while introducing them to consensus building strategies.

These anecdotes highlight some of the lives these young children impacted through their project. At this young age, these kindergartners had an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. This project exemplifies an opportunity for a very young audience to be active community contributors.

OUTCOMES

Community Partners

The Sullivan School and the North Adams Regional Hospital were the primary partners in this project. The personnel at the hospital worked with the kindergarten teacher to enhance the children's learning experiences. The nurse from the hospital explained to the children the safety precautions necessary in the hospital. In addition to expanding the content of the children's lessons to include safety, the interaction with the hospital staff diminished these children's own fear and anxiety in the emergency room setting.

However, as in many projects, there are several community partners that contribute to the success of the project. The other partners were:

- North Adams Public Library
- Custodial staff at North Adams Regional Hospital
- PTG at Sullivan School
- Triage Nurse
- CEO of North Adams Regional Hospital
- North Adams Transcript*
- Local Merchants
- North Adams Hoosac Savings Bank

I knew the hospital would have the benefit of the emergency room decorated and furnished for kids, but it had more of an impact on the children in my classes than I ever anticipated. It promoted such positive values and was great for their self esteem.

Roberta Sullivan,
Teacher



Patrick Muldoon, President, North Adams Regional Hospital, looks at book kindergarten classes made for the Emergency Room.

TIES TO THE MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

LEARNING STANDARDS/ OUTCOMES	ACTIVITY	ASSESSMENT
English/Language Arts LANGUAGE STRAND Standard: Use agreed upon rules for discussion.		
	Brainstorm a list of toys that would be appropriate for a hospital waiting room.	Self-scoring rubric. Did I raise my hand when I wanted to talk? Did I contribute? Did I listen to others? Acquire and use vocabulary.
	From a collection of different types of toys, each student will choose one toy and verbally tell why it would or would not be appropriate for use in the hospital.	Through observation and questions the teacher will be able to assess the student's understanding of the toy's safety features. Was the student able to use new vocabulary like "germs," "sanitary," "safe," and "appropriate?"
LITERATURE STRAND Standard: Recalling prior knowledge.		
	Students will draw a picture recalling a time when they were in the hospital or a doctor's office. They will explain their work verbally.	1. Teacher and peers will assess picture and verbal description through observation. 2. Identify the basic facts and ideas in what was read to them.
Mathematics Standard: Acquire confidence in using math.		
	Each morning students will collect and count toys.	Students will answer questions of: "How many?" "How many more than yesterday?" "How many more are needed to have twenty?"
	Students will trace numbers and fill in graphs that correspond to number of toys collected.	Teacher will observe accuracy and ease of graphing through direct observation. Relate everyday language to math language.
	Children will problem solve using counting activities. "How many students in the class?" "How many seats on the bus will we need?" "How many self portraits will we have?" "How many more days before we go?"	Children will circle the number they hear. Teacher will correct paper for accuracy in identifying correct written number. Reflect on and clarify thinking about math.

LESSON PLAN Emergency Room

Objective

Students contribute at least one idea to a brainstorm list of toys appropriate for a hospital waiting room.

Learning Standards

English Language Arts: Use agreed upon rules for discussion.

Materials

easel
newsprint
markers
poster of rubric for individual assessment
rubric for individual assessment
appropriate and inappropriate toys.

Procedure

Children sit on the floor around the teacher. Today we are going to be talking about toys. You might get excited so I want to review with you our rules for discussion: point to the poster and review them.

Ask: What kinds of toys might give comfort?

Responses: stuffed animals, blankets, favorite toy at home – car, etc.

Ask: Have you ever seen a blanket in a hospital waiting room's toy box?

Why do think you never saw one?

How do you care for a blanket?

What does your mother do if it gets dirty?

What would happen if it got dirty in the hospital and it belonged to no one special?

Tell them: We are going to play a game. I am going to remove a toy from the bag. Raise your hand and tell me if you think this is an appropriate toy for a hospital waiting room or not.

A stuffed animal	no - has to be washed
Magna Doodle	yes - washable
Doctor Kit	yes - washable / not sharp items

Place all the appropriate toys on display so students will know what kind of toys to bring in to school.

Assessment

Each child will complete a rubric read by the teacher. The child will circle "yes" or "no" next to each toy named to determine appropriateness.

Assessment

Throughout this project students evaluated their own performances with rubrics and checklists. The teachers assessed student growth through direct observation, questions and answers. Students and teachers reflected before, during and at the completion of the service-learning project.

With this age group, teacher-directed discussions were an effective strategy to assess both the academic and societal growth of the student population. The excitement and high energy generated by the project was evident by the student responses to the reflective questions. Students were eager to share stories of their own medical experiences, the toys they found comforting, and ways to earn money for toys. The teacher channeled these discussions to accomplish established outcomes such as increasing counting skills, using past experiences, and developing new vocabulary. This project matched the classroom instruction with solving a real world problem, in this case, making the emergency room less frightening.

Community Service Learning *"Learning by Doing"*

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Kindergartners Help Cheer Up the Hospital

Each year the students in Roberta Sullivan's kindergarten class create materials to decorate a treatment area of the North Adams Regional Hospital. The idea came to life a few years ago when Ms. Sullivan and her students painted pictures, wrote books, and donated stuffed animals and toys to the hospital's emergency room where children were being treated. The Kindergartners thought the patients would feel more comfortable in a room that had familiar works of art and books that kids could relate to. The project was submitted to the Hardee's Rise and Shine for Community Service Program by Deborah Coyne, North Adams CSL coordinator because she thought it was a special project. And special it was! Four projects from around the country were recognized, one from Florida, Indiana, Georgia and of course North Adams, Massachusetts. The school received a five thousand dollar prize and a color picture in the USA TODAY newspaper. Congratulations on a job well done!
(Sullivan School News, Dec. 1998)

TIMELINE

February

Brainstorm questions about the hospital facilities.
Develop partnership with hospital
Children draw pictures to decorate emergency room walls
Guest speaker from the hospital –
Safety Precautions:
Things Not To Touch In the Hospital

March

Organize field trip to hospital – permission slips/chaperones/vans
Brainstorm "How to make money to purchase toys?"; Lesson on "Germs"
Class interviews hospital personnel to determine hospital procedure
Class writes and illustrates book describing hospital "procedures"
Class collects money and toys for hospital waiting room

Class decorates voting boxes/nametags

Class representatives purchase toys for waiting room

April

Bind class book
Develop field trip rules
Invite newspaper to celebration at hospital
Celebration at hospital: decorate/celebrate

CONNECTING TO MCAS: OPEN RESPONSE QUESTION



Drawing Conclusions

Drawing Conclusions: Read the paragraph below. Underline the question you must answer. Circle the words in the paragraph that help you answer this question. Write your answer in paragraph format.

The parents brought their seven-year-old boy to the emergency room. About a half-hour ago he had been hit just above his right eye with a baseball and it was still bleeding. The young boy was hurt and scared. He had never been to an emergency room before today. A nurse brought the mother and child a book to read about the emergency room. On one page in the book it showed a doctor stitching a young boy's finger. The boy in the picture was not crying. What do you think this young boy will do if the nurse says he needs stitches over his eye? Why?

Challenges

Children completed self-portraits only to discover that all materials on the walls in the hospital had to be washable.

Students wanted their artwork to form a border around the top of the room but also wanted to hang their own work that would be too high for them to reach.

Students could not always agree on what books and toys to buy.

Some students expressed fear of visiting the emergency room because of past experiences.

Students and teachers worried about what would happen if a real emergency occurred while they were at the hospital.

Solutions

Students learned how to use the laminating machine after brainstorming possible solutions.

They solved this problem with the help of the custodial staff who supplied hammers and ladders and climbed behind the students to keep them safe.

Students solved this problem by learning how to vote. They used a ballot box and pictures and improved their counting skills.

A pediatric nurse and a triage nurse visited the classroom on several occasions to share pictures and give explanations of what the children could expect to see and hear when they visited. They also answered questions and asked a few of their own to help students reflect on the purpose of their visit.

They planned on how they would take the elevators to the next floor and exit the building. They practiced proper behavior.

Hardee's Restaurant across the USA are proud to salute young children "who rise and shine" for their communities.

Award given to Sullivan Elementary kindergartners for their "ER" projects

Extending the Vision

As a result of the emergency room project many other agencies in the community have expressed a wish to have the children decorate rooms for them. The children have decorated rooms at the Louison House, a homeless shelter. Plans are being discussed to decorate rooms in day care centers, police waiting rooms, courtrooms, mental health waiting rooms, doctor's offices and other places that could benefit from a child's touch.

To maintain our child-friendly emergency room, kindergartners visit the hospital yearly to redecorate the treatment area and donate new toys to the children treatment area.

IN CONCLUSION: Connecting School to Community

The Emergency Room Project was initiated after kindergartners expressed fear and discomfort when visiting the hospital. During a problem-solving session the children thought that patients would be more comfortable in a room that had familiar works of art and books kids could understand. As a class, they decided to change the appearance of one of the waiting rooms at the hospital by displaying their own original artwork. From within the walls of the classroom, an idea to improve a situation in the community was developed. The teacher contacted the community agency, North Adams Regional Hospital, and a connection between the school and the community was made.

The school and the North Adams Regional Hospital had a common goal: to create a child-friendly emergency room. Working together the classroom teacher and the hospital personnel gained insight into each other's working environments. The hospital personnel viewed first hand the way our youth learn during their classroom visits. On the other hand, the children were motivated to produce higher quality projects for a real audience.

As a result of the success of the emergency room project several other community agencies have requested student artwork for their facilities. With each facility these children have an opportunity to learn more about the make up of their community and the people who live in it. This project has enhanced the learning experiences of many kindergartners as they apply their learned classroom skills to real world problems. More importantly, this project has demonstrated to the community that even kindergartners can make a valuable contribution to their community.